

Appln. No. 09/696,114
Amendment dated March 28, 2006
Reply to Office Action of January 4, 2006

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of the present application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

The January 4, 2006 Final Office Action and the Examiner's comments have been carefully considered. In response, interviews were conducted with Examiner Hewitt, claims are amended and added, and remarks are set forth below in a sincere effort to place the present application in form for allowance. The amendments are supported by the application as originally filed. Therefore, no new matter is added.

Inasmuch as the present Amendment raises no new issues for consideration, and, in any event, places the present application in condition for allowance or in better condition for consideration on appeal, its entry under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.116 are respectfully requested.

INTERVIEW

The courtesy of Examiner Hewitt in conducting interviews in connection with this application is acknowledged and appreciated. Various interviews took place with Examiner Hewitt after the issuance of the January 4, 2006 Office Action. As a result of the last interview with the Examiner, which took place on or about March 21, 2006, Applicant agreed to amend the claims to

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more clearly recite structural features of the present invention to more clearly define the invention over the references of record. As a result of the interviews, Applicants' attorney, Robert Michal, transmitted proposed amended claims to Examiner Hewitt who discussed the claimed invention with Applicants' attorney and agreed that if certain amendments were made to the claims, they would define over the references of record.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 USC 103

In the Office Action claims 124, 126-128, 130-137, 139, 140, 142, 144, 145 and 147-171 are rejected as being obvious and unpatentable under 35 USC 103 over USP 4,839,829 (Freedman) in view USP 6,233,684 (Stefik et al.). Claims 141, 162 and 164 are rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Freedman and Stefik et al., and further in view of USP 6,131,162 (Yoshiyura et al.).

In response, claims 124, 126, 127, 130-133, 135-137, 139, 140, 142, 144, 147-154, 157-160, 162-169 and 171 are amended, and new claims 172 and 173 are added. Specifically, claim 124 is amended along the lines discussed with Examiner Hewitt during the interviews. The dependent claims are amended to maintain the consistent use of claim terminology, and claims 172 and 173 are added to define additional features of the present invention.

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In view of the amendment of the claims, the claims are in form for immediate allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

NEW CLAIMS

New claims 172 and 173 are added to the present application.

The present application now includes one (1) independent claim and forty-five (45) total claims, and the highest number of independent and total claims for which payment was previously made is twenty-two (22) and one hundred twenty-three (123) respectively. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that no additional fees are due for the presentation of claims 172 and 173. If any additional fees are due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 06-1378 for such sum.

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Entry of this Amendment under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.116, allowance of the claims and the passing of this application to issue are respectfully solicited.

If the Examiner disagrees with any of the foregoing, the Examiner is respectfully requested to point out where there is support for a contrary view.

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If the Examiner has any comments, questions, objections or recommendations, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the telephone number given below for prompt action.

Respectfully submitted,


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